

Structures/Scenery

Cover Story

REVIEW **HO**

The Local Grocer

Walthers Cornerstone
Jim's Red Owl Grocery Store

Review by Tom Teeple
Photos by Tom Teeple
and Doug DeBerg

Walthers Cornerstone HO-scale
Jim's Red Owl Grocery Store Kit
#933-3473, MSRP: \$21.98

Wm. K. Walthers, Inc.
5601 W. Florist Avenue
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www.walthers.com

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FOUNDED in 1922, Red Owl was a chain of grocery stores located mostly in the upper Midwest. The company was originally associated with General Mills, familiar to many as the maker of many food products from Cheerios and Wheaties to Bisquick and Pillsbury items. In

the late 1960s, Gamble-Skogmo purchased Red Owl. Gambles-Skogmo, based in Minnesota, once operated a variety of retail stores throughout the U.S. and Canada, most notably the Gambles chain. Red Owl's parent Gambles-Skogmo was taken over by Wickes in 1980s and later saw its

holdings splintered in an early 1980s bankruptcy. Supervalu, a grocery wholesaler, currently owns the rights to the Red Owl moniker and operates locations in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Le Roy, Minnesota.

This is another welcome re-release of a Magnuson kit from the 1970s. Magnuson Models first appears in *Walthers 1977 HO Railroad Catalog and Craft Train Reference Manual* with two kits: General Store and Miner's Union Hall. The releases are listed as being made of polyester and resin, retailing for \$14.95 and \$19.95, respectively. Magnuson Models' Old Wisconsin Brewery is the cover image for Walthers' 1978 annual product guide. Magnuson's line had grown to eight structures in a year's time. By the mid-1980s, Magnuson Models is presented as "manufactured and marketed by Walthers" with a product line that also then included vehicles and its previously released structures. The early 1990s sees the introduction of Walthers Cornerstone Series kits, and Magnuson's structure releases are last found as separate items in 1994.

The similarity of design and style found in Walthers' Cornerstone offerings present uniformity in look often



Walthers Cornerstone Jim's Red Owl Grocery Store kit retails for \$21.98 and includes window material, printed inserts for interior detail, plus a sticker sheet for signage. The sticker sheet provides additional Red Owl logos and striping to use on delivery trailers.

The finished project has Jim's Red Owl with warehouse behind the main building. A parking lot is found on one side of the business. Accents such as the telephone pole with wire running to electric conduit and box, fire hydrant, sidewalk, and guttering, plus fencing all add to a completed scene ready for your layout.



uplicated in towns and cities across North America. This Jim's Red Owl Grocery Store fits right in with other offerings in Walthers' line. Using various combinations of Walthers kits in large or small rows, one can present a realistic-looking business section on any model layout.

The Red Owl kit construction is rather straight forward with four walls and a roof that lends itself to all sorts of kit-bashing possibilities. Included with the kit are the standard details one would expect, such as a two-piece, some assembly required, chimney and window "glazing" material. There was some, though not excessive, flash on the edges and window openings. The edges of the walls have a bit of release angle, which needs to be filed to make precise 90-degree corners, but that is to be expected with all moldings of this type. Care should be taken when cutting the walls off sprues. In a couple spots, I found the sprue is cast into the brick pattern, and a little re-carving is necessary.

The huge display windows on the main floor begged for some interior detail. Since I planned to light the building, I also needed to add some office space upstairs. This meant



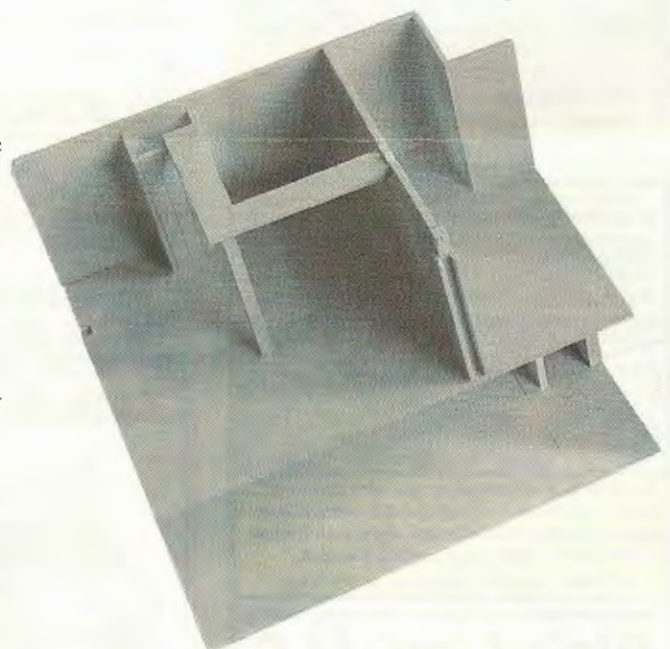
Roberts Brick Mortar was used on the exterior walls of this kit. This product is exceptional for use as a covering on brick styrene surfaces. The white wash for the walls was highlighted with rough edges and areas to show age. Keeping with Red Owl's scheme, the building was finished in white with red.

that an interior section with dividing walls, support beams, and details would work best to create the illusion of a finished space. This interior was constructed of styrene sheets. I was able to use the included store interior backdrop on the ground level. I enhanced the effect by adding some shelves, check-out stands, plus desks in the offices above, all scratchbuilt using bits of styrene. I also departed from convention on this building by mounting the big windows on the outside of the frame rather than the inside walls.

Walthers provides the Red Owl store sign and side billboard in the kit contents. Also included are stickers for possible use on a delivery trailer. This is a great addition and adds to the kit's value. The main structure was decorated white with red accents, keeping with the Red Owl brand colors. The kit walls are cast in a light tan color

Being relatively inexpensive plastic models, Walthers' kits lend themselves well to kitbashing.

with tar-colored roof. I used Roberts Brick Mortar Formula on the brick outer walls. Roberts Brick Mortar is available in a 1-ounce bottle and a 4-ounce jar. I used the 4-ounce jar for this project and still had product left for future use. I aimed to present a fairly contemporary-looking business using an old building. The design of Walthers' kit lends itself well to this project. The finish was given some



To enhance the kit, an interior was scratchbuilt from styrene. The interior provided walls and support beams plus gave a second floor for installing office furniture. Walthers includes printed store interior for the first floor.

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Nearly finished, here's Walthers Cornerstone series HO-scale Jim's Red Owl awaiting the install of its interior and layout placement. This collection of buildings from Walthers offers the hobbyists many choices in recreating classic North American business districts found in nearly every size town.

roughed up or "well used" looks to the bricks, window, and door frames.

Beyond the mentioned ability to use kits such as this for kitbashing projects, it should be noted that entry-level hobbyists will not be intimidated by attempting to build one of these kits and will likely be very pleased with the final product.

These kits are nice reproductions of period structures that exist in any era from the beginning of the 20th

century right up to today and in any part of the country. Being relatively inexpensive plastic models, Walthers' kits lend themselves well to kitbashing. These buildings are excellent starting points if you are looking for something different in a structure. The finished model will look right at home on your small town main street or on some older city street where urban redevelopment hasn't reached, like in the neighborhoods near noisy rail yards. 🚂



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